

VZCZCXRO9171
PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK
DE RUEHGB #2215/01 1981458
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
P 161458Z JUL 08
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8339
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 002215

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/16/2018
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PINS](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [UN](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: UNAMI HR CHIEF EAGER TO HELP WITH MEK TRANSFER

REF: A. BAGHDAD 2105
[1](#)B. BAGHDAD 1889

Classified By: PolCouns Matt Tueller for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (S) SUMMARY: UNAMI Human Rights Chief Hania Mufti said on July 14 that UNAMI would be willing to help with the transfer of responsibility for the Mujahedin e-Khalq (MEK) from the USG to the GOI. Specifically, Hania said UNAMI could press the GOI to accept non-refoulement obligations, provide humanitarian resources, and help with legal status issues of MEK members. Hania emphasized that our plan to bring Minister of Human Rights Wijdan Salim to Camp Ashraf was crucial to ensuring security for MEK members because she believes the biggest threat to the MEK are certain members in the GOI, particularly in the Prime Minister's Office. Hania was pleased to hear that the USG is committed to transferring responsibility to the GOI and said that some in the European community in Baghdad believe the USG is holding onto the MEK as a leverage tool against Iran. UNAMI will be present at a proposed meeting on July 20 with the ICRC, MEK leaders, Minister of Human Rights, and the USG. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (S) Outgoing UNAMI Human Rights Chief Hania Mufti told Task Force 134 (TF134) Commanding Officer and PolOff on July 14 that UNAMI was eager to play a role in the transfer of responsibility over the Mujahedin e-Khalq (MEK) from the USG to the GOI. She explained that her office has been in continuous contact with the MEK and has been advising members to plan for changes in legal status after MNF-I leaves, and "Protected Persons" status is lost. Although Hania is leaving her position next month and will be in Amman beginning July 17, she said that her team here could play a strong part in negotiating transfer of responsibility for the MEK and ensuring the GOI would protect MEK members.

[1](#)3. (C) Hania said the UNAMI Human Rights Office could help by pressing the GOI to adhere to the principle of non-refoulement. Hania said a shared understanding would be necessary with Minister of Foreign Affairs Zebari, the Prime Minister's Office, National Security Advisor Mowaffaq Al-Rubaie, and Minister of Interior Bolani. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has made contradictory statements regarding treatment of the MEK, and according to Hania, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) is "rabidly anti-MEK." Hania believes the biggest threat to the MEK is certain members in the GOI, particularly in the PMO. She said with pressure from the USG, UNAMI, and the Minister of Human Rights, they could obtain assurances from key players. Hania recommended we talk to Zebari, who she thinks is open to suggestions on this issue.

[1](#)4. (C) UNAMI could also help with any humanitarian needs during the transition and then when MEK members are under GOI protection, such as helping members leave the camp if they desire and return to Iran. (Note: This is a function ICRC has been filling effectively since 2003 with support from the Ministry of Human Rights). Hania said that in previous discussion with MEK leaders, they acknowledged that former MEK who have returned to Iran are doing fine and are not threatened by the government. She predicts that many members

would return to Iran if they were not pressured by the leadership to stay in the camp.

¶5. (S) Finally, Hania said UNAMI could help the MEK transition from a USG declared "Protected Persons" status to legal residents of Iraq or Iran. MEK leadership told her they want to stay recognized as a group, but Hania has counseled them that this would be impossible, and they would have to transition to having legal status as individual residents of Iraq. Hania said the best course of action would be first to grant legal resident status in Iraq to MEK members and then to assist them in repatriation to Iran if they desired, or ensure their security protection in Iraq.

¶6. (S) TF134 confirmed Hania's understanding that Minister of Human Rights Wijdan Salim will visit Camp Ashraf with the USG. Hania thinks involving Wijdan in negotiations with the MEK is a good strategy because it will ease MEK concerns about the GOI. Hania said Wijdan, due to her good relationship with the PM, could influence the PM and GOI to give assurances of safety and security to the MEK. Hania recommended we ask Wijdan to persuade Ali Al-Dabbagh, who she believes to be the most influential in the PM's circle, to tame his anti-MEK statements. (Comment: We believe Hania overestimates the influence Ali Al-Dabbagh and Wijdan Salim have on the PM. Nonetheless, the PM has been showing a much more constructive attitude on MEK issues of late. End Comment.) She said that Wijdan would be the first GOI representative to visit Ashraf, which would be a good sign to the MEK that humanitarian concerns are important to the GOI.

¶7. (S) Hania was pleased to hear that the USG is committed

BAGHDAD 00002215 002 OF 002

to transferring responsibility to the GOI and said that European diplomats in Baghdad generally believe the USG is holding onto the MEK as a leverage tool against Iran. Hania said her office would be committed to working with the USG and GOI on ensuring this process provides security and assurances to the MEK. UNAMI will be present at a proposed meeting on July 20 with the ICRC, MEK leaders, Minister of Human Rights, and the USG.

¶8. (S) COMMENT: As we transfer responsibility of protecting the MEK at Camp Ashraf to the GOI, we want to ensure the members are treated humanely and face no threats from Iraqi forces. In coordination with UNHCR, the UNAMI human rights team can help give international credibility to GoI assurances of humane treatment with regard to the MEK and can help the GOI adhere to those assurances. We will impress on UNAMI the importance of close communication with ICRC. UNAMI can also assist in pressuring certain GOI officials as needed. Since they have established relationships with MEK leaders and members, UNAMI can also help assuage concerns they have about GOI policy.
CROCKER